

CUMBERLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

A regular meeting of the Cumberland School Committee was held on Thursday, September 9, 2010 at the Cumberland High School Auditorium, 2600 Mendon Road, Cumberland, Rhode Island.

Agenda Item #1: Chairman Convenes Meeting

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Costa at 7:38 p.m.

Members Present: Lisa Beaulieu, Donald Costa, Brian Kelly, Jeff Mutter, Ryan Pearson, Dan Pedro, Earl Wood.

Staff Present: Donna A. Morelle, Ed.D., Superintendent, Joseph A. Rotella, Esq., Director of Administration, Fred Schockaert, Dep. Director of Special Services, Dr. Susan Carney, Asst. Superintendent.

Agenda Item #2: Pledge of Allegiance

Agenda Item #3: Approval of Agenda

Mr. Pearson made a motion to move up Agenda Item 9C – Transportation Update by Durham School Services – to be Agenda Item #6, so that it would come before Comments from the Public- from original Agenda Item #6-everything else on the agenda would move down by one spot, 2nd by Mr. Pedro, Mr. Kelly and Mr. Wood,

approved 7-0. Mr. Wood then made a motion to approve the agenda as amended, 2nd by Mr. Pearson, approved 7- 0.

Agenda Item #4: Student Government Report

Two members of the Student Government reported the following: 8/31 staff orientation – Student Government provided breakfast for the teachers. 9/1 first day of school for Freshman, went well, had a short class assembly. 9/2 first day of school for all other students, went well, all students were excited to be back. 9/8 held a Freshman parents question and answer night, Mrs. Gould, Mr. Keller and some rep's from Student Government were on hand to answer all sorts of questions. 9/15 will be the first Student Government meeting of this year. 9/16 Freshman will hold elections for President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. 9/22 CHS will hold a "Back to School Evening" where the parents can follow their child's schedule so that they can get a feel for what their child does on a daily basis.

Agenda Item #5: Chairperson's Report

There is no report at this time.

Agenda Item #6: Transportation Update by Durham School Services

Several executives from Durham Transportation were on hand for this portion of the meeting. Steve S., Paul N., Keith G., and Sean B., were very apologetic to Dr. Morelle, members of the School Committee and to families in Cumberland that have experienced recent problems

with the busses. They reiterated how it took several months to negotiate a long term contract with Cumberland and only had the best interest for Cumberland in mind while working on this contract. Steve spoke about a transition plan that they are currently working on. He stated that they are importing current student data in their work set so that they can get back to as close as possible to stops and routes from last year. They are not going to make any fast movements, but he did say that they would have communication and routes in place in a timely fashion. Steve also said that their team at Durham along with the drivers and the Cumberland Police Department will be validating the routes and stops. They are hoping to get this information, once approved, out to the community within a week or so – they will determine how to get the information out. He did reiterate that the short time window in August did influence some of the problems that they had been having and that usually such a change would take about three months to work on. He did mention that Durham had started working on ten different route scenarios back in January, 2010. In April, 2010, they began their final approach (this is what they are running today) they started updating stops, graduation of students, etc., and then on August 13th they were told to revert back to walking distances and so that changed all the rules and they had to act quickly. They agreed to do it, but when looking back, they wished they did not agree to do it in such a short period of time- they only had about 13 business days to complete the task. At this point the SC could ask questions if they chose to. Mr. Kelly said that the late vote in August was due to having the families

in mind, not wanting them to go through anymore changes than necessary. He also asked about the elementary school bus monitors and was assured that there would be monitors on those busses and he asked Durham if there were master lists with the child's name on it and his or her stop – if there was a list, could the monitors review it so they could check the child's stop – only in the beginning of the school year. Durham said the monitors are hired by the town but he would check with the town to see if the monitors could review this list. Durham also reported that all of their drivers from last year are back this year and that is good for familiarity with the children, stops, routes, etc.

Mr. Kelly mentioned that there were some unsafe stops and was wondering how they were approved, but Durham said that there was a glitch in their system and that those particular stops will not be an issue because they are working with the police department and will make sure that these stops are noted in their system, this year and upcoming years – they will make sure that they are flagged properly in their system. Dr. Morelle said that this disaster is beyond the scope of walking distances, there were safety issues, bad stops not being recorded, overcrowding. She also noted that she conveyed to the SC that it was ill advised (regarding the vote on 8/12) but she also told the SC that Durham had said they would respond to whatever vote the SC took. The SC was very concerned about how Durham had received their decision and Mr. Pearson asked Durham, and they said they had received it on 8/13 via telephone. Mr. Pearson wanted to make sure of what the directive was that Durham received and so

he asked if the directive they were given was to revert to the old walking distances but not to maintain the routes and at that point Dr. Morelle answered the question. Dr. Morelle reiterated that they had all had many conversations about this and in fact it is on the record the evening that the vote was taken, in addition an email she sent to the committee prior to this meeting and after the first two days of school when these problems emerged, that there were a number of variables ongoing that would effect the routes. She also mentioned that she told the SC that there were three things in play right now, she also told this to Durham – in an afternoon meeting prior to the SC meeting. She told Durham that the SC voted to defer the implementation of the amendments to the transportation policy to school year 2011 – 2012- which was the exact motion on the night of the meeting-she went on to say they had talked about issues that in addition to going back to the “old” walking distances, that needed to be addressed, one of those issues was arriving on time at school - at two of the schools in the district that are tier four schools – Cumberland Hill and Community – so as part of the responsibility to solve that problem we adjusted the start times to those schools so that we could absorb some of the responsibility, however in the afternoon the busses have been unable to pick the students up on time and so Dr. Morelle said that in recent days she had indicated to SC members and Durham that it was very obvious that what occurred in the first two days of school and after the weekend when they attempted to correct the safety concerns that were identified is beyond the scope of the implementation of the walking distances,

and those were the questions that they were trying to get Durham to respond to. She also noted that Durham had made a statement earlier tonight that they accept the responsibility for the issues that they have addressed.

The first thing they identified were safety issues, some places where busses should not stop had been identified during previous years but had never been saved in Durham's system so these stops would not carry over from year to year. Also, Durham has been our bus provider for five years and this is the first year for overcrowding – that is outside the scope of the vote that the committee took. She realizes that the policy vote has been implemented and she understands what the intent of the committee was and she also believes that she conveyed clearly to Durham what they needed to respond to and also she remembered saying to the SC both at the time and privately, privately she said it was “ill advised” and publicly she said she held back a little bit, but Durham said they would respond to whatever vote the SC took. In this afternoons meeting Durham did admit that that was the first error they had made. At this point Mr. Mutter asked the Durham rep if he had heard about the fact that Mr. Mutter was working on the redesign of the elementary and middle schools so it would not be a good idea to change any walking distances or routes this year until the changes in the schools were made and then with this in mind that was when the motion was made at the 8/12 meeting. The rep said he was not – nor were any reps from Durham at that meeting – so they followed the directive to go back to the previous policy – walking distance policy. Dr. Morelle

then asked Mr. Costa if she could make a remark and she went on to say that Mr. Mutter was accurate and the motion that evening was to vote to defer the implementation of the transportation policy amendments for the walking distances for the 2011-2012 school year. Dr. Morelle went on to say that there was conversation that took place between Mr. Mutter, Mrs. Beaulieu and then prior to the vote that night, Mr. Costa asked Dr. Morelle a direct question about the meeting that she and Mr. Costa had had with Mr. Neeves, from Durham, on the Wednesday before the meeting and then Dr. Morelle went into a discussion about several issues regarding the policy/variables. She told him, and was very clear about it, that with the consideration of that vote that it was not a “cookie cutter” model, and that if they did pass the motion that evening the bus company would make every effort to respond to that, they had given their word on that and Dr. Morelle said she conveyed to the bus company what the SC vote was and noted that there was no intent not to follow the committees vote. Dr. Morelle went on and pointed out several issues that were discussed that evening prior to the vote – Durham’s response in a weeks time between then and when they sent the information to the newspaper would be a little different, the framework for the routes would be using last years, but that was not so simple either, the Chief of Police needed to be contacted to review routes, additional crossing guards were going to be needed. Having said that, Dr. Morelle feels that the policy implementation has been flawed and the only thing to do right now is to find a way to work together on a reasonable timeline that Durham can accept and take

responsibility for to make sure the next iteration of this route plan does not result in the issues that the district has had in the past week. At this point there was conversation back and forth between Mr. Costa and Durham regarding when the bus routes were sent to the Superintendent and the Police Chief for review, it appears that sometime around 8/24 was when the reviews were taking place and then Mr. Mutter asked a question about Durham needing three months to do this task and why they committed to doing this when they knew they only had three weeks to do it in. Durham's response was when the local staff got the directive they wanted to come up with the best routes available, but they wanted to try, they knew about the budget issues but most of them are members of the community and have worked with Cumberland for over five years – they wanted to try, but looking back, they should have said no. Mr. Wood asked about the overcrowding and Durham felt that the overcrowded issue had been fixed. Mr. Wood also asked if after Durham completes their route changes, will a letter go out to parents and Dr. Morelle said that there would be a note that goes home – when the route changes are complete. There was further discussion about the issues that lead up to the current situation, and Mr. Pearson thought that some blame should be on Durham and some on our own administration. Dr. Morelle said that after struggling with policies and budgets for months, we need to work together, and if the SC felt that she did not give them or Durham all of the information, then she will take additional steps in the future to make sure that the SC tells her exactly what they need/want – it is all of our responsibility to work

together. Durham seemed to think that the last couple of days were better, less phone calls. Durham will be adding telephone lines specifically dedicated to Cumberland. Durham will make sure that the police department has 48 hours to review to the route changes and then Durham will respond to them. SC wants updates and sign-offs as they come along, and Mr. Mutter suggested that in the future, motions are airtight and clear. Durham absolutely regrets what has happened and will work continuously to correct the situation.

Agenda Item #7: Comments from the Public

There were several public comments – children being left at wrong bus stops, busses being two hours late, no communication, people asking who is accountable, why was school cancelled on the Friday before Labor Day, children walking on unsafe routes, half mile policy needs to be reviewed – it depends on where the half mile is, transportation policy needs to be reviewed regarding no adults having to be at the bus stop for students in grades 1 – 12, kindergarten students need to have names on tags.

Agenda Item #8: Reports of Standing Committees

A. Payment of Bills - Mr. Kelly indicated that the finance committee had met last night and had two payment registers for a total of \$920,501.93 and it was approved with a 2-0 vote to bring it to the full committee. Mr. Kelly's motion is to pay the two invoices totaling \$920,501.93, 2nd by Mr. Wood, approved 6-0.

B. Discussion and/or Vote on Delta Dental Contract – Mr. Kelly made

a motion – based on claims running in excess of premiums – to extend the contract with Delta Dental by a year, realize a net 1% over the life of the 3 years – the contract for that added year when you factor in the reductions to this year and next year – and that was voted 3-0 to move to the full committee, 2nd by Mr. Pearson and Mrs. Beaulieu, approved 6-0.

C. Discussion and/or vote on Amendment to Sodexo Facilities Contract – Mr. Kelly made a motion to table this item, 2nd by Mr. Pearson, approved 6-0.

D. Discussion and/or vote on Administrator Salary Schedule – E. Discussion and/or vote on Administrator Contract Template/Potential Benefits – Mr. Pearson made a motion to table both D and E, 2nd by Mr. Kelly, approved 6-0.

Agenda Item # 9: Approval of Minutes

No action taken at this time.

Agenda Item #10: New Business

A. Update on 2010-2011 School Year Enrollments – Mr. Kelly made a motion to table this item, 2nd by Mr. Pearson, approved 6-0.

B. Home School Instruction Requests 2010-2011 School Year – three renewals were received and Mr. Pearson made a motion to approve them, 2nd by Mrs. Beaulieu, approved 6-0.

Agenda Item #11: Personnel Recommendations – Dr. Morelle had the following personnel recommendations:

Leave of Absence

I request the advice and consent of the School Committee on the unpaid Parental Leave of Absence for Leah Hogan, .5 PE/APE/Health Teacher, at Systemwide, for the 2010-2011 school year, effective 8/30/2010. Mr. Pearson made a motion to approve this leave, 2nd by Mrs. Beaulieu, approved 6-0.

Appointments

I request the advice and consent of the School Committee on the appointment of Bruce Burak, PE/APE/Health Teacher, at Systemwide, effective 9/1/2010. (FTE: 0.7; Step 3; Lane: n/a; Co-pay: 15.5%; budgeted)

I request the advice and consent of the School Committee on the appointment of Michael Dansereau, Mathematics Teacher, at Cumberland High School, effective 9/1/2010. (FTE: 1.0; Step 1; Lane: n/a; Co-pay: 15.5%; budgeted)

I request the advice and consent of the School Committee on the appointment of Grace Dormer, Special Educator, at Joseph L. McCourt Middle School, effective 9/1/2010. (FTE: 1.0; Step 1; Lane: n/a; Co-pay: 15.5%; budgeted)

I request the advice and consent of the School Committee appointment of Sherri Heard, PE/APE/Health Teacher, at Systemwide, effective 9/1/2010. (FTE: 0.5; Step 1; Lane: n/a ; Co-pay: 15.5%; budgeted)

I request the advice and consent of the School Committee on the

appointment of Traci Lynch, Speech/Language Pathologist, at Systemwide, effective 9/20/2010. (FTE: 1.0; Step 4; Lane: MA; Co-pay: 15.5%; budgeted)

I request the advice and consent of the School Committee on the appointment of Jennifer Merrill, PE/APE/Health Teacher, at Systemwide, effective 9/1/2010. (FTE: 0.7; Step 1; Lane: n/a; Co-pay: 15.5%; budgeted)

I request the advice and consent of the School Committee on the appointment of Robin Nason, Special Educator, at JJM Cumberland Hill Elementary School, effective 9/1/2010. (FTE: 1.0; Step 1; Lane: n/a; Co-pay: 15.5%; budgeted)

I request the advice and consent of the School Committee on the appointment of Colin Smith, PE/APE/Health Teacher, at Systemwide, effective 9/1/2010. (FTE: 0.8; Step 1; Lane: n/a; Co-pay: 15.5%; budgeted)

I request the advice and consent of the School Committee on the appointment of Nora Swartwout, School Psychologist, at Systemwide, effective 9/1/2010. (FTE: 1.0; Step 1; Lane: MA; Co-pay: 15.5%; budgeted)

I request the advice and consent of the School Committee on the appointment of Lalanya Way, Reading Specialist, at Systemwide, effective 9/1/2010. (FTE: 1.0; Step 1; Lane: MA; Co-pay: 15.5%; budgeted)

District Coordinators

I request the advice and consent of the School Committee on the appointment of

Monique Swiszczy, K-8 Math Coordinator, at Systemwide, for the 2010-2011 School Year, effective 9/9/2010. (Budgeted)

I request the advice and consent of the School Committee on the appointment of

Lisa DiGiovanni, K-8 Literacy Coordinator, at Systemwide, for the 2010-2011 School Year, effective 9/9/2010. (Budgeted)

I request the advice and consent of the School Committee on the appointment of

James Field, Behavioral Intervention Coordinator, at Systemwide, for the 2010-2011 School Year, effective 9/9/2010. (Budgeted)

I request the advice and consent of the School Committee on the appointment of Lionel Tessier, Science Teacher, at Joseph L. McCourt Middle School, effective 9/9/2010. (FTE: 1.0; Step 2; Lane: n/a; Co-pay: 15.5%; budgeted)

Mr. Pearson made a motion to approve the above appointments, as presented, 2nd by Mr. Kelly, approved 6-0.

Agenda Item #12: Comments from the Public

Comments were made regarding the \$98,000 for two more busses, who is going to regulate the increased traffic to and from schools because more parents are providing transportation, three children to a seat on the busses, concerns about bad weather coming soon.

Agenda Item #13: School Committee Comments (School Liaison Reports)

There are no reports at this time.

Agenda Item #14: Vote to go into Executive Session for Discussion on Items Referred to in R.I.G.L. 42-46-5.

At this time Mr. Kelly made a motion to adjourn, 2nd by Mr. Pearson, approved 6-0.

Meeting was adjourned at 11:10 pm.

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by Linda A. Jackvony